

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

231647Z Sep 04

ACTION PRM-00

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| INFO | LOG-00 | COR-00 | AF-00   | AID-00  | ACQ-00  | CIAE-00 | DODE-00 |
|      | DS-00  | EB-00  | EUR-00  | UTED-00 | VC-00   | TEDE-00 | INR-00  |
|      | IO-00  | L-00   | VCE-00  | AC-00   | NSAE-00 | NSCE-00 | OIC-00  |
|      | OIG-00 | OMB-00 | PA-00   | PM-00   | PRS-00  | ACE-00  | P-00    |
|      | SP-00  | SSO-00 | SS-00   | STR-00  | TEST-00 | TRSE-00 | T-00    |
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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6962  
INFO AMEMBASSY MONROVIA  
AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN  
USMISSION GENEVA  
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY  
AMEMBASSY FREETOWN  
ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS ACCRA 001921

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDED CAPTION)

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UNHCR SIGNS REPATRIATION AGREEMENT FOR LIBERIAN REFUGEES IN GHANA; REPORT OF FIRST DARFUR REFUGEES

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the GOG, and the Government of Liberia signed a landmark agreement on September 22 in Accra, providing for the voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees living in Ghana. Unlike the flawed repatriation attempted during the 1990's, prospects for a more durable solution for these Liberian refugees now appear brighter. We expect few Liberians living in Ghana to repatriate immediately, though improving conditions, particularly in the eastern Liberian counties, could eventually lead to a larger exodus. Visiting UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner told Emboffs he favored continuing with resettlement of Liberian refugees from Ghana in tandem with voluntary repatriation. There have also been media reports of some 60 refugees from Darfur, Sudan, entering Ghana. END SUMMARY.

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Come On Home  
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2. (U) Officials representing the UNHCR, GOG, and GOL signed a repatriation agreement on September 22 that proffers a legal and operational framework for the orderly, voluntary return of Liberian refugees. Both UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) will assist with logistics, with most refugees in Ghana expected to travel by boat. UNHCR will provide food, basic household items, and tools to refugees upon arrival in Liberia, while the GOL will assist with the recovery of property and the recertification of academic credentials.

3. (SBU) The agreement is the culmination of many months of speculation that have left some refugees apprehensive, since many remember the failed repatriation attempts of the 1990's. This time, UNHCR is striving for a better organized, more deliberate repatriation. UNHCR reps told poloff and RefCoord that the UNHCR plans to sign similar repatriation agreements with Sierra Leone and Cote D'Ivoire within the next week. UNHCR is also planning to sign repatriation memoranda of understanding with other West African countries hosting large numbers of Liberians. This would form part of UNHCR's assisted repatriation of up to 29,000 refugees from throughout West Africa over the next three months.

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Resettlement to Continue  
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4. (SBU) Visiting UN Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees Kamel Morjane told Emboffs that he favored the continuation of resettlement efforts while the repatriation was underway, although he acknowledged this matter had been a subject of intense internal debate during his visit here. He hoped for USG cooperation in establishing more transparent criteria for resettlement in the U.S., noting that any refugee in his right mind with hopes of living in the U.S. would never opt for repatriation to Liberia. He and UNHCR Ghana representative Thomas Albrecht (protect) said they would not want to guess how many Liberians in Ghana would initially seek repatriation, although UNHCR has estimated the number at 2,700, in addition to 300 who would repatriate on their own without assistance. Morjane expected many refugees to be reticent to repatriate in light of their concerns over security in Liberia, schooling for their children, health, and the ability to earn a

livelihood. However, Albrecht was somewhat more hopeful, saying that Liberian refugees in Ghana are cautious but eager to return home.

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Trickle of Darfur Refugees in Ghana  
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15. (SBU) Meanwhile, a trickle of refugees from other countries, principally Sudan and Cote d'Ivoire has been arriving in Ghana at the rate of about 50 per week for the past several weeks. According to the September 21 Ghana Times, some 60 refugees from Sudan's Darfur region arrived in Ghana this week. A member of the Ghana Refugee Board confirmed to Refcoord that the GOG has given them temporary shelter. Some Sudanese and Ivorian refugees have settled provisionally at the predominantly Liberian Budumburam refugee camp west of Accra, while others have opted for the predominantly Sierra Leonan camp of Krisna, in Ghana's southwestern corner. While the UNHCR has assumed initial responsibility for them, the newly reconstituted Ghana Refugee Board will determine whether these new arrivals qualify for refugee status. Morjane told Emboffs that Ghana's reputation for stability was probably the main drawing card for these refugees. While the Ivorians arrive overland or by boat with little difficulty, the Sudanese head south on foot, often aided by sympathetic truck drivers and immigration control officers along their arduous journey.

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COMMENT  
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16. (SBU) Most Ghanaians will probably welcome the repatriation agreement. Many people here - and most government officials - regard the Liberian refugees as an unsustainable burden and there are some concerns about criminality among Liberian refugees. Nonetheless, there is not significant pressure to be rid of the Liberian refugees. According to Morjane, Ghana's Minister of Interior told him before the public signing ceremony that, while he would have to make some public criticism of the presence of Liberian refugees here, he saw these Liberians as "brothers" whom Ghana had to help. The Ghanaian Times feature editorial on September 22 cited the reported arrival of Darfur refugees as "certainly startling, their arrival has forcefully brought Darfur to our doorstep." Nonetheless, the editorial did not raise concerns about the presence of these refugees here, noting that, together with the signing of the Liberian repatriation agreement on UN International Peace Day, they serve as "a reminder to every Ghanaian of the necessity of maintaining the relative peace and stability in the country." Some observers point out that these refugees require few government services and generate business for local shops. Over the near term, we anticipate little enthusiasm among Ghana's 42,000-strong Liberian community for repatriation, since most of them hail from eastern counties that have not yet been declared safe. Most of the initial tranche of Liberians voluntarily repatriating are more likely to come from other countries in the region.

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